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ABSTRACT

Various methods of meeting and classroom techniques are presented in this booklet. It is aimed at teachers and advisors seeking innovative ideas to encourage student interest and participation in the classroom. The methods examined include the lecture or speech, group discussion, panel discussion, colloquy, role playing, buzz session, forum, interview, demonstration, workshop, skit, listening team, symposium, field trip, and the idea inventory. Each method is accompanied by a description of the method and a listing of advantages and disadvantages in using the particular method. Many techniques also include diagrams illustrating the best ways to arrange a classroom for that type of presentation (where to place speakers, chairman, audience, reaction panel, blackboards, etc.). (CT)

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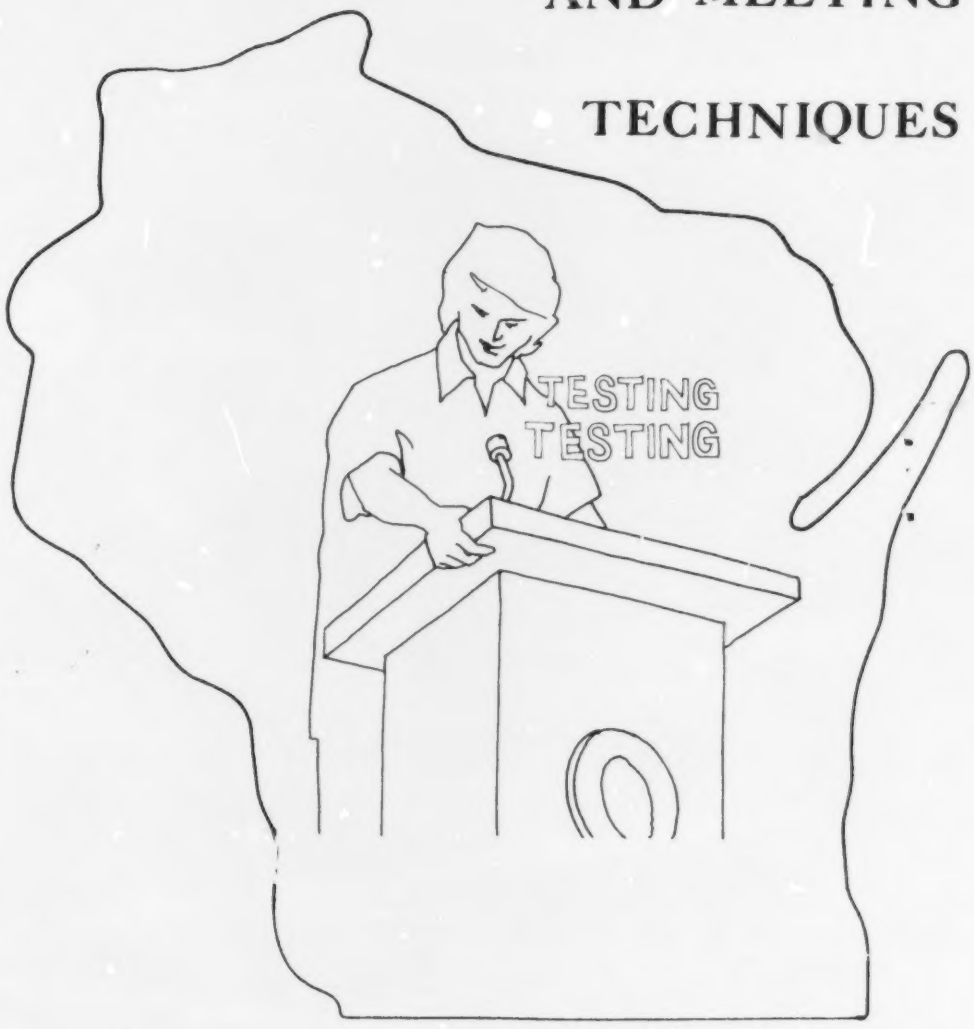
IDEAS FOR IMPROVING YOUR CLASSROOM AND MEETING TECHNIQUES



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IDEAS FOR IMPROVING YOUR CLASSROOM AND MEETING TECHNIQUES

F. J. Doering

THE DEMONSTRATION WAY

I'd rather see a lesson
Than hear one any day.
I'd rather you would walk with me
Than merely show the way.

The eye's a better teacher
And more willing than the ear,
And counsel is confusing,
But example's always clear.

The best of all the teachers
Are those who live their creeds,
For to see good put in action
Is what everybody needs.

I can soon learn how to do it
If you let me see it done.
I can watch your hands in action,
But your tongue too fast may run.

And the counsel you are giving
May be very fine and true,
But I'd rather get my lesson
By observing what you do.

This poem best illustrates a student's viewpoint on when learning takes place. Obviously, if there is one big criticism of meetings and classroom teaching it is that one person, usually the instructor, talks too much. The lecture approach to the classroom still reigns supreme and it is not as effective as most of us would like to believe. It's time we take a new look at the opportunities available to teachers and leaders in making their meetings and classroom interesting and educational.

Variety in program presentation heightens audience interest and promotes active participation. Programs using methods suggested in this brochure will bring about greater involvement of the students, especially those who are members of your youth group. The personal satisfaction found in a good meeting or classroom situation will make for a larger, more active, and more responsive membership.

THE LECTURE OR SPEECH

An oral presentation by the instructor or a resource person having to do with organized thoughts and ideas.

Advantages

1. Quick way to present materials.
2. Has appeal - easier to listen than to read.
3. Simple to organize.
4. All that is needed are seats and lectern.
5. Message could be facilitated through use of visual aids.

Disadvantages

1. Used entirely too much - especially in classrooms.
2. Difficult for students to remain alert.
3. Frequently little thought is given to any type of continuity pattern - a speaker is obtained merely to fill out the program.
4. No audience participation.
5. Speakers often judged by entertainment value rather than the message delivered.

LECTURE OR SPEECH DIAGRAM

Lecturer
or
Speaker

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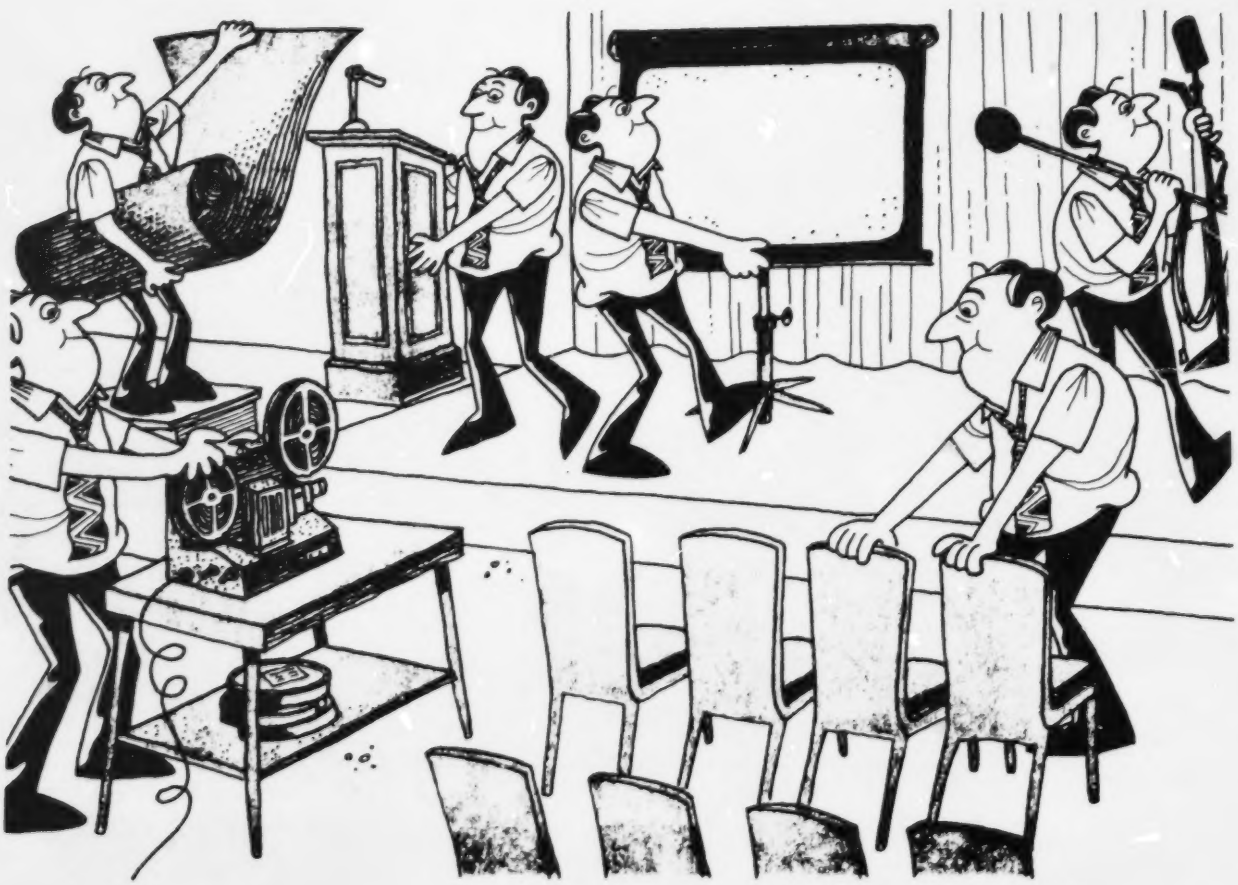
X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X

audience



GROUP DISCUSSION

Participation of a group of persons (usually 6-20) in a purposeful conversation in which they explore, teach, and learn about a topic of mutual interest.

Careful planning is essential to success in leading group discussions and the ability of the group leader is of paramount importance. The facilities available, and in particular the arrangement of the meeting room, is vital to conducting good group discussion.

The lecture and group discussion are, perhaps, the two most used teaching forms in existence today. They can be very effective, but in most situations are "overused". True, most teachers burdened with large classes have not been provided sufficient time to adequately plan and use effectively other methods of instruction. However, as class load and numbers are being reduced, it is imperative that teachers explore more ways of stimulating youth - "variety is still the spice of life."

Advantages

1. Group discussions, when conducted properly, are interesting and may even be exciting.
2. Group discussion permits full participation.
3. It can establish concensus democratically.
4. Pools the abilities, knowledge, and experience of all to reach a common goal.

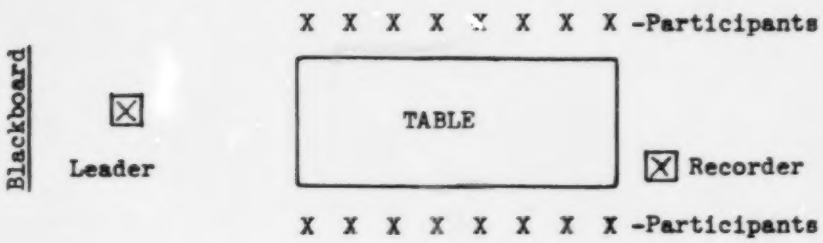
Disadvantages

1. Group discussion is time consuming, especially if the group includes persons of widely different backgrounds.

2. A few people, or the leader, may completely dominate the discussion.

3. The success of group discussion is largely determined by the ability of the leader.

GROUP DISCUSSION DIAGRAM



PANEL DISCUSSION

A small group of persons, usually about three to six, who sit around a table in the presence of an audience and discuss a topic in which they have a special knowledge. Leadership is provided by the moderator.

Advantages

1. Offers greater possibilities for more thoroughly exploring a subject.
2. Brings together several points of view and a wide range of informed opinion.
3. Atmosphere usually is one of informality.
4. Simple to stage - a table and a few chairs may meet all the requirements.
5. Audiences normally appreciate hearing from more than one speaker.

Disadvantages

1. Often panel discussion moderator fails to keep participants on the subject.
2. Often one or two panel members completely dominate the discussion.
3. Frequently difficult to find participants with speaking ability and knowledge of subject matter. A weak participant can ruin the effectiveness of a panel.
4. Each discussant is left to his own to develop the discussion with little thought for coordination, integration, or summarization, which accentuates the need for a strong moderator.

PANEL DISCUSSION DIAGRAM

X X X X X X X X X X

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X X X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X X X

audience

SCREENING PANEL

Three to five persons from the audience discuss the educational needs of the audience in the presence of a speaker or resource person. This will enable the speaker or resource person to pattern his presentation to the needs, interests, and level of audience understanding, or compose the presentation on the spot. This provides an opportunity to involve the audience and encourage them to express their needs.

SCREENING PANEL DIAGRAM

MODERATOR X X X RESOURCE PERSONS

Audience Representatives

X X X X X X X X X X Audience

X X X X X X X X X X

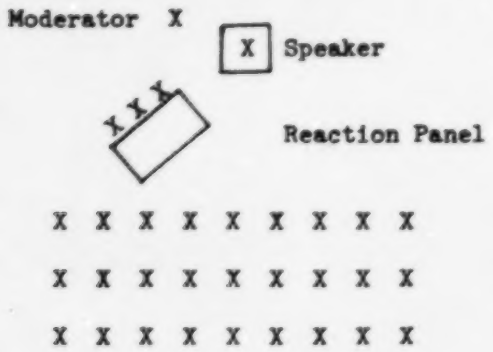
X X X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X X X

REACTION PANEL

Three to five persons from the audience or special resource people, listen to a presentation and then hold a purposeful conversation in reaction to the presentation. Again to stimulate the audience and to clarify and evaluate audience feelings about the presentation.

REACTION PANEL DIAGRAM



OPPOSING PANEL

As the title indicates, this would be a panel with specific intention of bringing out opposing views of the presentation, which was just completed. Comments are for the purpose of making certain facts stand out more clearly by means of contrast. After the opposing panel has made comments, the speaker has the opportunity to make rebuttals.

SHADOW PANEL

The shadow panel is similar to the regular panel, but in reverse. Instead of the usual procedure of the audience directing questions to the panel, in the shadow panel method, each member of the panel, in turn, directs a question to the audience. This method is utilized to secure maximum audience participation.

The moderator should meet with his panel prior to the actual discussion period. Each person should be keenly aware of his or her responsibility. A good summary by the moderator is important when the time period has nearly ended.

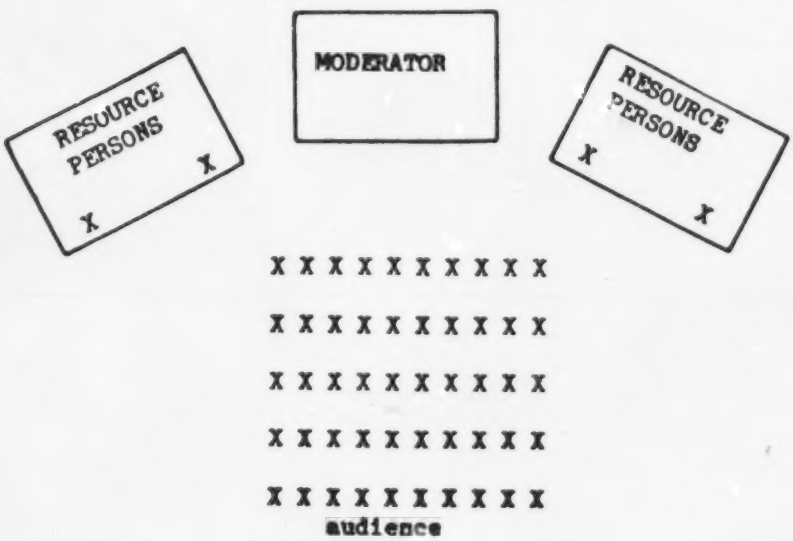
Advantages

1. A method of securing maximum audience participation.
2. If properly conducted should increase interest to everyone present.
3. Should improve the quality of the questions asked.
4. More thought provoking to audience.

Disadvantages

1. Places a higher premium on excellent moderators and panelists.
2. Could prove embarrassing to an audience participant if not handled properly.
3. Time on each question must be closely observed.
4. Must be careful that the "outspoken" individuals in the audience do not completely dominate the questioning period.

PANEL DISCUSSION DIAGRAM


MODERATOR
RESOURCE PERSONS
X
X
RESOURCE PERSONS
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X X X X X X X X X X
audience

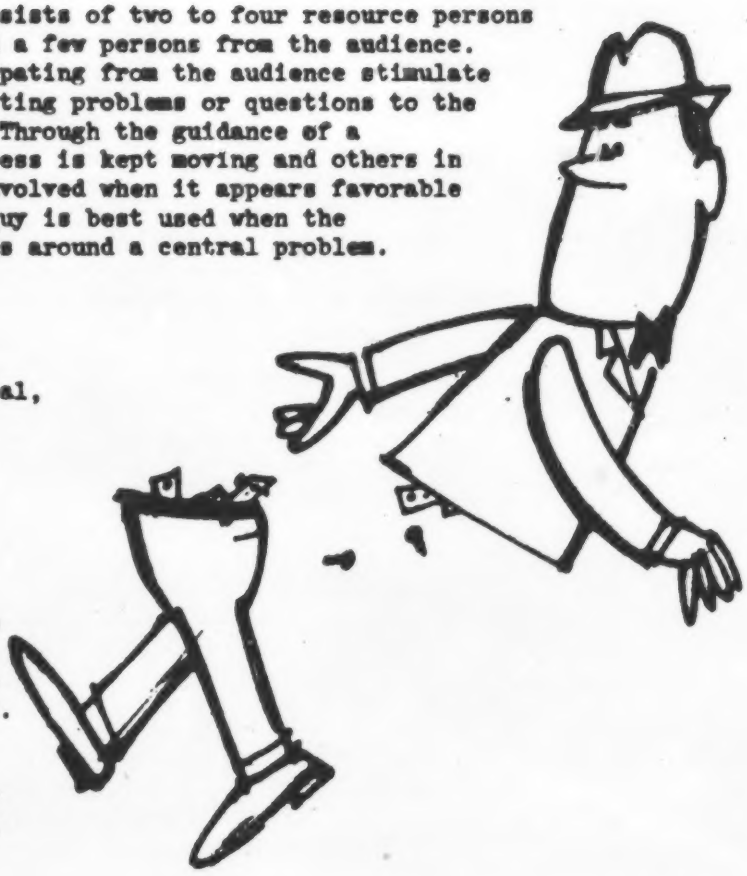
EXPANDING PANEL

The expanding panel is a combination presentation and discussion in which 6 to 12 persons hold discussion surrounded on three sides by the audience, followed by an arrangement in which the entire group will participate. The moderator determines when to close the small group discussion and open the discussion up to the entire group. Stimulates interest in a situation where the group is relatively large and discussing a topic of mutual interest.

"This wasn't so bad. I might come back tomorrow."

THE COLLOQUY

A colloquy consists of two to four resource persons (as in a panel) and a few persons from the audience. The persons participating from the audience stimulate discussion by directing problems or questions to the experts on stage. Through the guidance of a moderator, the process is kept moving and others in the audience are involved when it appears favorable to do so. A colloquy is best used when the consideration hinges around a central problem.



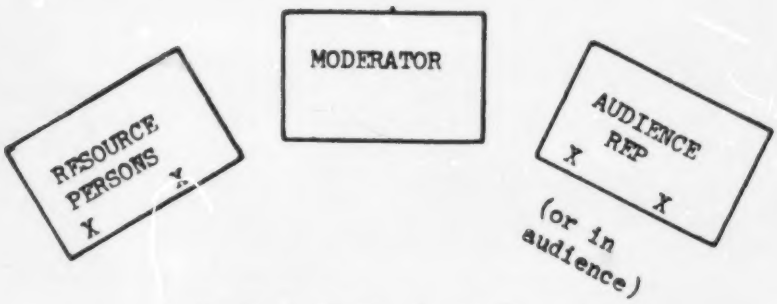
Advantages

1. Most problems are controversial, consequently interest is quickly established and maintained.
2. Presents to resource people the audience level of understanding topics.
3. Provides the opportunity for experts to deal with problems as they arise.
4. Tendency for experts to remain alert to the problems at hand when they know audience interrogators are present.

Disadvantages

1. Much of the success of a colloquy is dependent upon the moderator.
2. The possibility exists for an expert or "planted" questioner to dominate the program.
3. With the number of participants frequently enough time is not provided for each to express his ideas and for audience participation.
4. Enough time may not be provided to adequately cover both sides of the question.

COLLOQUY DIAGRAM



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ROLE PLAYING

Role playing is the spontaneous acting out (without script) of a situation, incident, condition, or circumstance by selected members of a group to portray a human relationship problem common to members of the group. Considerable planning should precede the role playing scene in order for it to have an impact on the audience. The usual procedure in role playing is to have two to five members of the group reproduce a situation which the group wishes to study by acting out a scene as it would happen in real life. Usually this should last no longer than ten minutes.

Following the role playing the learning group discusses, interprets, and analyzes the action which took place. This is generally in the form of a group discussion.

Advantages

1. Emotional impact is greater than hearing or reading about the situation.
2. Learner or listener is more apt to make a self-examination - the opportunity to gain insight into their own behavior and attitudes.
3. The method is quite new and novel - people are less apt to be bored and more apt to be interested.
4. It provides the opportunity for presenting several possible solutions to a problem.
5. Provides for more participation on the part of group members.
6. Develops skill in problem solving and diagnosis.

Disadvantages

1. Role playing takes time and should not be used unless there is sufficient time to prepare the skit and for adequate group discussion to follow.
2. The method becomes ineffective if used too long - scene must be cut at proper time.
3. Presentation may not be on the level the group can understand.
4. Capable role-players are not always available - method is no better than persons assuming the various roles.

5. Success is often directly related to the ability of the director.

6. Role playing is ineffective when there is only one solution to a problem.

ROLE PLAYING DIAGRAM

Role Players

X X X X X X X X X X X

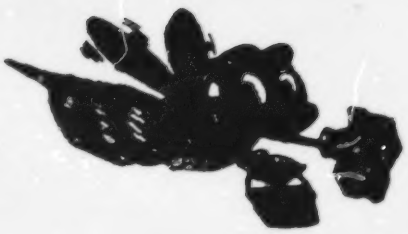
X X X X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X X X X

X X X X X X X X X X X

Audience

THE BUZZ SESSION



A system used for involving every member of a large audience directly in the discussion process. The audience is divided up into small groups of about six members, who meet for a short period of time, usually under ten minutes. Their task during this short period of time may involve:

1. Developing questions for a speaker or panel.
2. Discovering areas of interest for future meetings.
3. Evaluating a meeting or workshop in terms of its value to participants.
4. An attempt to discover areas in which the group would like further information.

The chairman must be very careful and specific in giving directions. If the audience is unfamiliar with this method, a demonstration would be in order. Each group should designate a leader and a recorder. The leader invites reactions and comments from his group. The recorder makes a written record of contributions made by participants. Oral reporting of group finding is usually the task of the leader, but occasionally may be performed by the recorder, especially if the writing is difficult to decipher.

Advantages

1. Gives everyone the opportunity to participate without having to appear before the entire audience or group.
2. Promotes individual identification with the program and its goals.
3. Provides a source of fresh ideas.
4. Enables large group to evaluate program.

Disadvantages

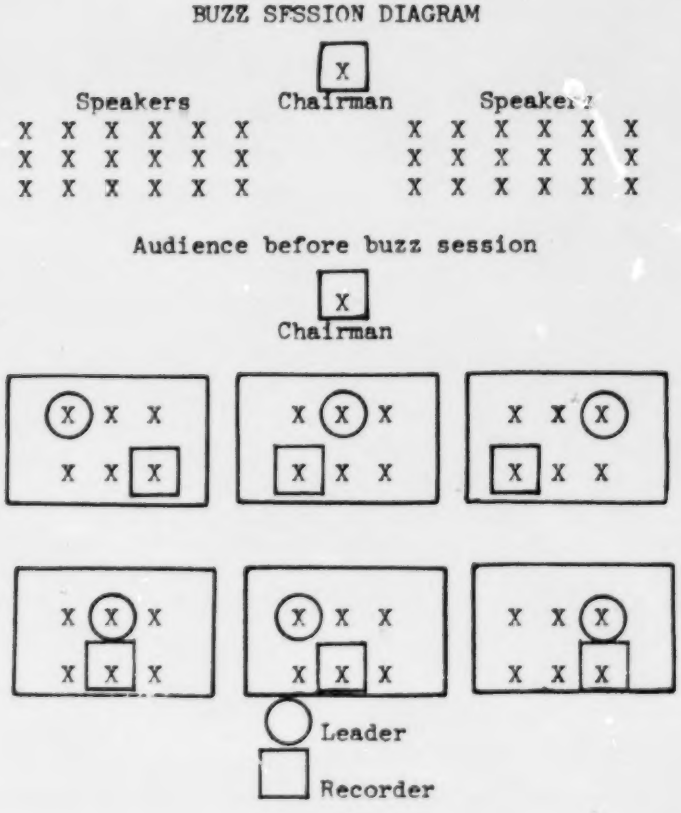
1. Getting group to interact is sometimes very difficult and frustrating to leader.

2. Contributions of several groups may be contradictory or difficult to combine. May even get completely opposite viewpoints.

3. The amount of individual participation is restricted.

4. Where fixed seats exist in an auditorium problems may be created in getting groups together.

BUZZ SESSION DIAGRAM



THE FORUM

The forum is a period of open discussion carried on by an entire audience and one or more resource persons and directed by a moderator. The forum is commonly used following speeches, panels, symposiums and the like. Whenever the forum concept is brought into the formal stage presentation, the name given to the presentation should be "lecture forum", "panel forum", or "symposium forum." The forum is distinguished from the common question-answer session in that the audience in addition to asking questions of a resource person, may raise issues or offer additional information.

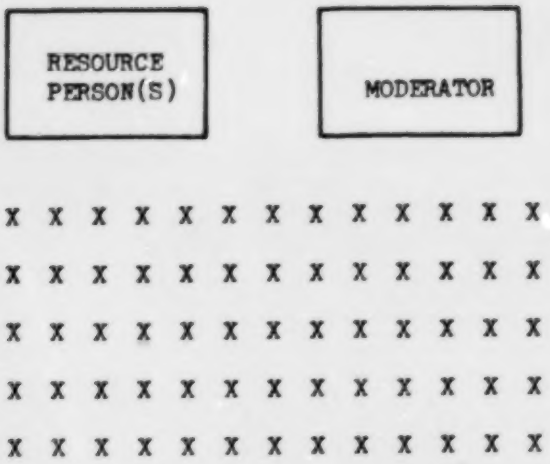
Advantages

1. Permits a large amount of information to be given out directly.
2. Stimulates audience to think since they know they will be able to participate.
3. Helps to maintain interest.
4. Many points of view are presented.

Disadvantages

1. Much of the success dependent on moderator's ability.
2. Time element often a problem.
3. "Takeover" by certain member(s) of audience is always a danger.
4. Problems frequently created by long, complicated questions, which may be irrelevant or have already been answered.

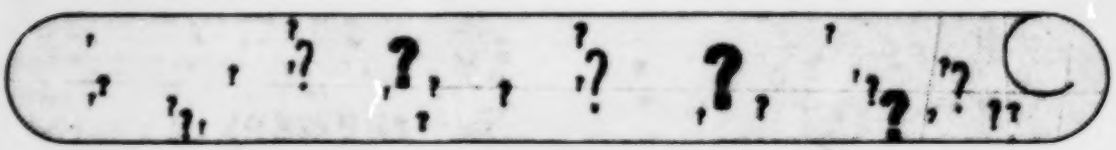
DIAGRAM OF FORUM



THE INTERVIEW

The interview is generally of short duration, approximately 5-30 minutes. The format of the television talk shows are largely based on this method. Though talk shows are usually two hours long, you will note that a number of guests are interviewed.

The interview is a presentation in which an interviewer systematically questions and explores various aspects of a topic with one or two resource people before an audience. The resource persons are generally aware of the nature of the questions to which they will be subjected.

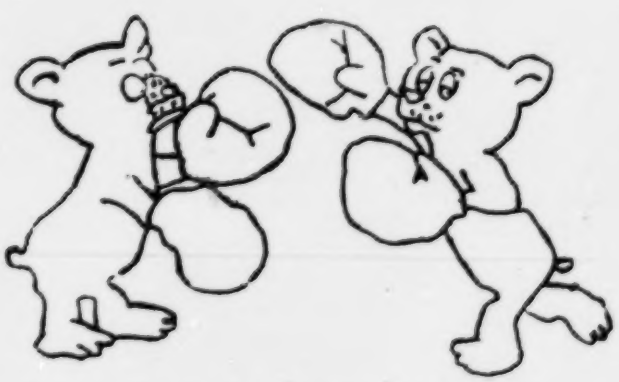


Advantages

1. Generally a pleasant informal method of presenting information.
2. A good interviewer draws out information in a very interesting manner.
3. Provides the opportunity for some very knowledgeable people to participate as resource persons.
4. Stimulates interest, especially if both sides of a controversial area are discussed.

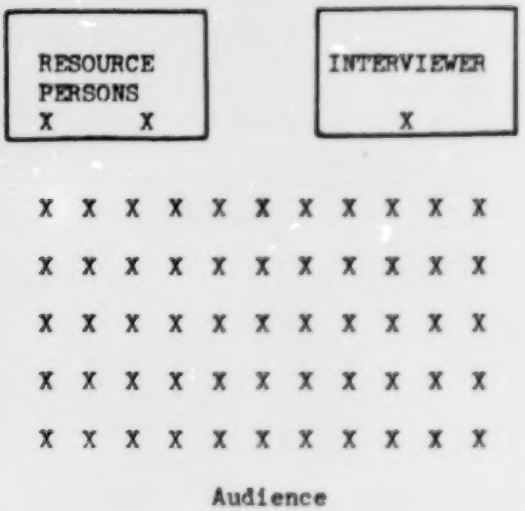
Disadvantages

1. The success of this type of communication is highly dependent upon a skilled interviewer.
2. Provides little or no opportunity for audience participation.
3. Shortness of the interview often limits its use.



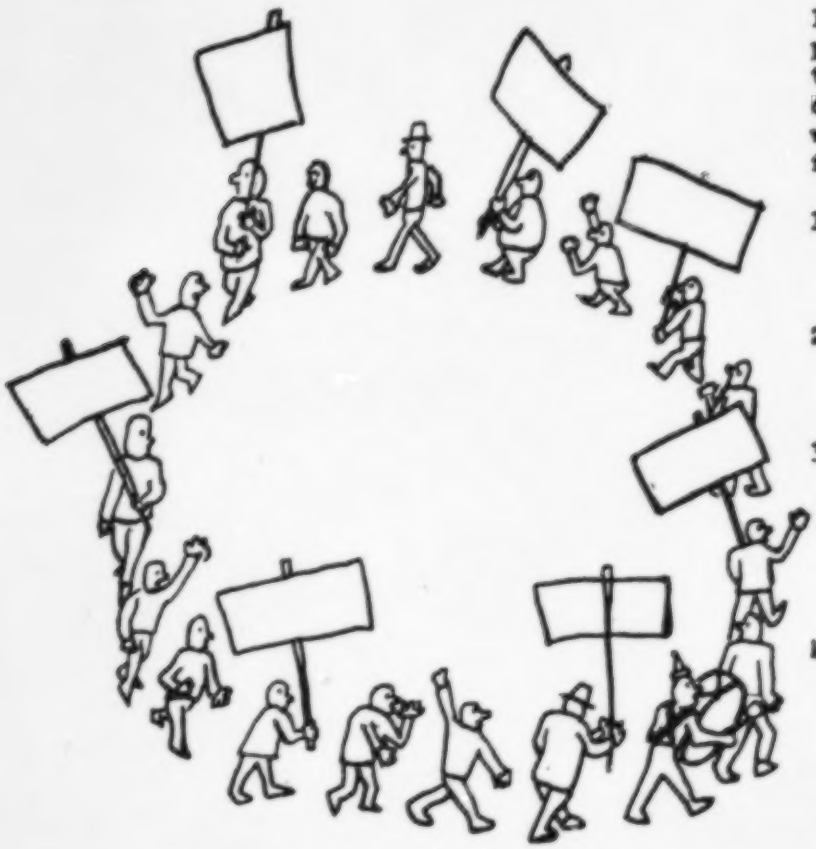
4. Often difficult to arrange for participation by competent, interesting resource persons.

DIAGRAM OF THE INTERVIEW



THE DEMONSTRATION

Demonstrations are used primarily in teaching manipulative skills to a group. In addition to teaching skills, demonstrations can be used to advantage in teaching concepts, appreciations, and understandings. It is important that a demonstration be associated with the job being studied, and geared to the age and ability level of students in the class.



In general, the proper procedure to use in a demonstration would be the following:

1. Outline the procedure in logical steps.
2. Identify the key points to be emphasized.
3. Select demonstration materials and equipment most likely to be available.
4. Show each operation slowly, step by step; repeat where necessary. (It is a good idea to rehearse and important to use words easily understood)
5. Whenever practical, have one or more members in the group repeat the demonstration in the presence of the others.
6. Solicit questions at each step.
7. Be sure to include a good summary.

Advantages

1. Peculiarly suited to teaching skills.
2. Demonstrations lend themselves readily to repeated use.
3. The very nature of this hands-on activity stimulates group action.
4. Builds confidence in the performer.

Disadvantages

1. May require considerable equipment to be transported to the meeting place.
2. Requires a certain amount of speaking ability and showmanship on the part of the demonstrator(s).
3. Frequently not readily seen or heard by portions of the audience.

Facilities

Adequate seating or space for the group so that all can see and hear the demonstrators in confort.

THE WORKSHOP

A workshop should generally be composed of a group of from 10-25 persons sharing a common interest or problem, meeting together to solve the problem, or to extend their knowledge of the subject through intensive study, research, and discussion.

The procedure in conducting a workshop is an extremely flexible one. It may be conducted over a weekend, or three days, or a week, or extended over periodic meetings for several months. A series of workshops on related problems may be incorporated into the program of a conference, convention, or the like. The director of the workshop gives leadership and lends his special expertise to the subject at hand. Specialists or consultants may be called in as needed. Participants must be willing to work both independently and cooperatively.

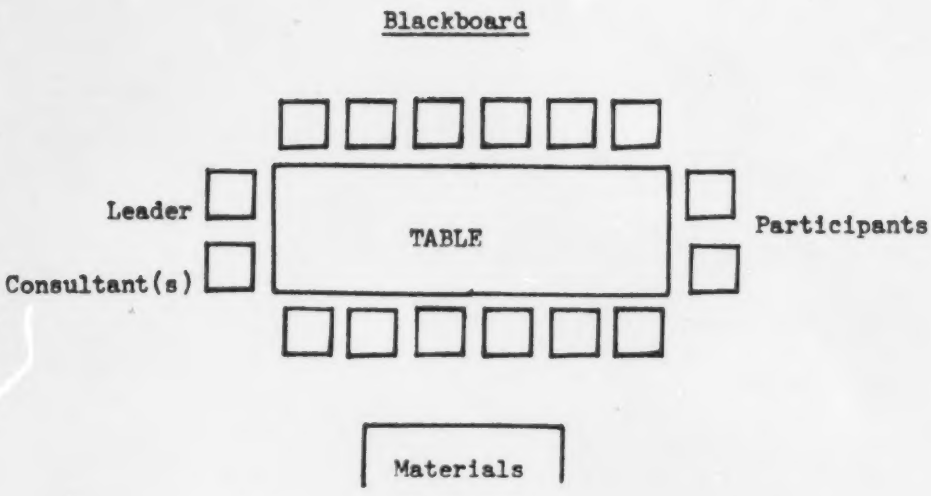
Advantages

1. Permits a high degree of individual participation.
2. Provides for group determination of goals and methods.
3. Provides expertise from a number of sources.
4. Provides the opportunity to explore, identify, and seek solutions.

Disadvantages

1. Requires a great deal of time on the part of the participants and resource personnel.
2. Oftentimes can be quite expensive - high proportion of consultants to participants and may require special materials and facilities.

DIAGRAM OF THE WORKSHOP



THE SKIT

The skit is a short, rehearsed, dramatic presentation involving two or more persons. It is acted out from a prepared script (usually) and dramatizes an incident which illustrates a problem or situation. The skit may be used at any point in a program. It may precede or follow a lecture, film, panel, and the like, but should take place before the discussion period. Oftentimes multiple skits may be used to illustrate different approaches to a problem. An example of this would be a parliamentary procedure skit in which one skit would demonstrate improper procedure, immediately followed by the same material with the proper parliamentary procedure demonstrated.

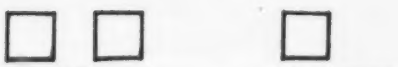
Advantages

1. Promotes interest and stimulates good discussion.
2. Personalizes a situation and promotes emotional involvement on the part of the audience.
3. Demands active participation on the part of some members.

Disadvantages

1. **More demanding in time on the part of some participants.**
2. **Costume and props could be overdone.**
3. **Caution needed to prevent inappropriate or irrelevant actions on the part of some participants.**

DIAGRAM OF THE SKIT



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Actors - (stage)

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Audience

THE LISTENING TEAM TECHNIQUE

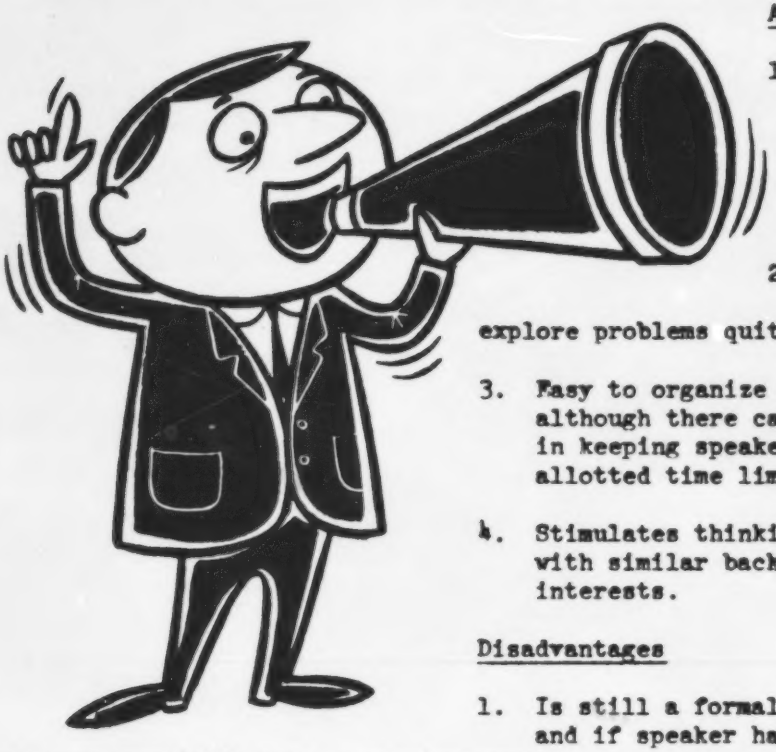
The listening team technique is used to focus attention of small groups or teams on a specific question while listening to a presentation. Members of the team react and discuss phases of the presentation with other team members and arrive at a consensus, which is later reported to the entire group.

The designated leader must organize the listening teams before the speaker makes his presentation. A careful briefing by the leader should prepare the speaker for the discussion and the reporting which follows his speech. He should recognize that no rebuttal is necessary on his part, but clarification on comments should be encouraged on the part of the speaker.

In an audience of more than 100 people, two or more listening teams may be designated. Usually five or six different questions can be raised, sufficiently diverse, to create interest on the part of the audience.

THE SYMPOSIUM

A symposium may be composed of two or more participants, each of whom delivered a prepared talk on a given subject. The objective is to present different points of view on a particular subject.



Advantages

1. Talks are usually short and offer variety thereby reducing boredom.
2. Possible to identify and explore problems quite thoroughly.
3. Easy to organize and present, although there can be a problem in keeping speakers within their allotted time limits.
4. Stimulates thinking among persons with similar backgrounds and interests.

Disadvantages

1. Is still a formal type of speech and if speaker has limitations, audience may drift into a passive mood.
2. Sometimes participants do not check with each other which may result in repetition and deviation from the assigned topic.
3. The true symposium does not involve audience participation, but time should be reserved for questions from the audience (a symposium forum).

SYMPOSIUM DIAGRAM

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Audience

THE FIELD TRIP

The field trip is the modern equivalent of the oldest method of learning. To most educators today it should be apparent that, as our patterns of living become more and more complex, there are more and more aspects of learning that must be accomplished by first hand observation and experience. In this era of career education emphasis, the field trip has become more important than ever before in our schools.

Advantages

1. Greater retention of material than through ordinary classroom methods.
2. Easier to hold attention of the group.
3. There is apt to be a greater uniformity in the learning.
4. Serves as a motivating device - every student likes to get away from school for a period of time.
5. Provides an excellent opportunity for followthrough after the field trip.

Disadvantages

1. The availability and cost of transportation. Some schools have limited field trips for this reason, while others have placed the cost directly on the individual students participating or upon the youth group involved.
2. Requires a greater length of time to present the material.
3. Greater difficulty in scheduling the event as time is often limited.
4. More human element involved, therefore a greater opportunity for negative learning experiences.
5. Generally there is a limitation in the number of people who can participate.

THE IDEA INVENTORY

The idea inventory (often referred to as brainstorming) is a spontaneous outpouring of ideas for 10-30 minutes on a topic of interest or need. It is an excellent means of releasing the creativity of a group and makes it possible for a group to consider alternative solutions to problems unhampered by limitations of skills and abilities. All ideas are accepted without challenge and as many ideas are recorded as possible, but not discussed during this period.

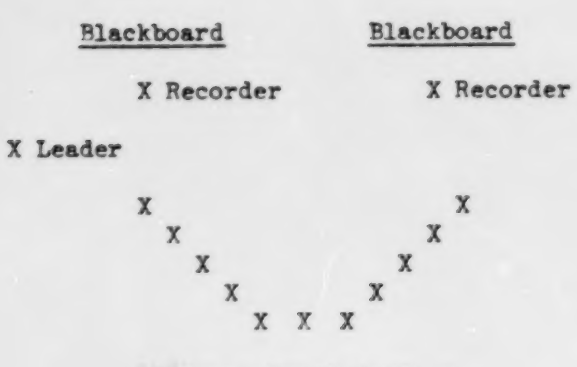
The idea inventory is often relatively unrestricted, but it is possible to limit it to a single problem. It can be used in nearly any social setting and quantity is preferred over quality. The idea inventory is especially valuable:

1. When alternative ideas are needed prior to making a decision.

2. When many aspects of a problem need consideration and many, many ideas are needed.

The elimination of criticism is one of the most powerful reasons this technique is effective. Even the most wild idea could lead to valuable creation. Participants seize on opportunities to improve on or add to ideas of others. Ideas can explode - one used to generate another. All ideas should be recorded. Subject matter should be simple, specific and familiar. System works best with group of 10-15 people.

THE IDEA INVENTORY DIAGRAM



SUMMARY

The various methods of meeting and classroom techniques mentioned in this brochure are but a few of the methods available to the innovative teacher and/or advisor. Changing student attitudes have made it imperative for today's teacher to seek innovative ideas for improving classroom and meeting techniques. It is especially important for teachers of elective courses to explore all possible means of maintaining and improving classroom interest and participation on the part of students. To this end, the information in this brochure is written for teachers everywhere.

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